

HARTING PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the Meeting of Harting Parish Council held at Harting Community Hall
on **Thursday 16 September 2021** at **7.00 p.m.**

Present: Mr Shaxson (Chair), Mrs Bramley, Mrs Bull, Mrs Curran, Mrs Dawson, Mrs Gaterell, Mrs Martin, Mr Miller and Mr Palmer.

In attendance: Mrs Walker (Parish Clerk).

There was 1 member of public in attendance.

106. Apologies for absence: Mr Bonner and Mr Johnson-Hill.

107. Declarations of Interest: None.

108. Minutes from Meeting held on 15 July 2021.

The minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 15 July 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

109. Questions from the Public:

The following questions were raised by the member of public:

- Why the Council has not agreed to meet in the Warren to be shown how to put things right, this was requested in June 2020
- The Tree Council, Forestry Commission and the Ancient Woodlands are not happy with the situation in the Warren
- *The Chair responded stressing that there had been a public meeting in June 2020 to address this and other concerns. Having heard explanations most people in the community had accepted the circumstances and moved forward, many to become volunteers. The Council had taken note of all the comments at that meeting. He also pointed out the rapid regeneration of the Warren and the successful planting that had take place earlier in the year.*
- Whether the minutes relating to the 'Questions from the public' of the Council meeting held on 24 June 2021 were correct
The Chair and one of the councillors confirmed the situation that arose at the June Council meeting and confirmed the minutes reflected this accurately.
- Why letter sent to Clerk in July 2021, regarding the ash dieback works in the Warren, was not read out at the July Council meeting
The clerk stated that items of correspondence cannot be read out in full at Council meetings. The letter in question had been circulated to the councillors ahead of the July meeting and the substance of the response was agreed. The Chair confirmed this was correct.

110. Matters of Urgent Public Importance: None

111. Reports from the County and District Councillor

Dr O'Kelly, the County and District Councillor attended and had circulated a report prior to the meeting. The following points of interest were noted:

- The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy – whether there are any resources or help that is specifically needed and which could be advertised locally
- Concerns about the ambulance response time in the area

112. Banking – Change of bank from HSBC to Unity Trust bank

At its meeting on 18 March 2021 the Council agreed to set up an online banking facility with HSBC, the Council's current bank.

Subsequent to this decision it was discovered that the bank could not offer an online dual signatory authorisation process that would satisfy the Financial Regulations. A letter had also been received from the bank to confirm that from 1 November 2021 the Community Account held by the Council will no longer be available and will be converted to a Small Business Account attracting a fee of £5 per month.

Due to these changes a proposal was made to transfer the Council business to the Unity Trust bank, which has a track record with many other council accounts and can fulfil the requirements of the Financial Regulations. This would mean a 'triple authority' system could be set up whereby the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) could set up payments which are then authorised by two authorised signatories. The Unity Trust bank makes a charge of £6 per month for accounts with a turnover of up to £100,000 per annum. The move to online banking will save cost in relation to both postage charges and time previously taken preparing cheques.

It was proposed the signatories on the current HSBC bank were retained for the new bank.

It was agreed to get an independent assessment of the credit worthiness of the Unity Trust bank to ensure they were robust and had a suitable credit rating.

The proposals were then considered. An amendment was proposed to add the words 'subject to a satisfactory credit rating from an independent credit agency' at the start of proposals (i) and (ii) which read:

- i. To agree the closure of the HSBC bank account*
- ii. To agree to open a current bank account with Unity Trust bank with triple authority at a cost of £6 per month*

The amendments were agreed.

The following proposals, including substantive proposal (i) and (ii), were then agreed:

The following proposals were agreed:

- i. To note the report*
- ii. That, subject to a satisfactory credit rating from an independent credit agency, to agree the closure of the HSBC bank account*
- iii. That, subject to a satisfactory credit rating from an independent credit agency, to agree to open a current bank account with Unity Trust bank with triple authority at a cost of £6 per month*
- iv. To agree the existing bank signatories will be set up on the new account.*
- v. To agree the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) will be appointed as the administrator of the account but will not be able to authorise any payments*

113. Online banking policy

The potential introduction of online banking necessitates a policy to ensure the system is operated securely and in line with the Council Financial Regulations.

The draft policy had been written and was considered by the members.

The following proposal was agreed:

That subject to two minor adjustments to section 3a(i) to remove the 's' from 'enters' and to change 'approval' to 'approved' the Council agreed to adopt the Online Banking Policy

114. Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the Parish Council and ensure that management is effective and adequate. Although the option to use online banking was included in the Financial Regulations in September 2019 there were some further minor wording changes required to Section 6 'Instructions for making payments' to ensure they would be adequate.

The following proposals were agreed:

That the following alterations should be made to the Financial Regulations to enable online banking

- i. Section 6.2 – to replace the words 'the RFO' with 'two bank signatories'*
- ii. Section 6.3 – to replace the words 'or other' with 'online banking or previously approved'*
- iii. Section 6.4 – to replace 'orders for payments drawn' with 'online payments'*

115. Legal advice for Harting Community Hall and the War Memorial Playing Fields

Harting Community Hall (HCH)

Due to concerns about the lack of HCH trustees and the impact of this on the future management of the village hall (see Minute 116 below), and as there was no August Council meeting, the Chairman in conjunction with the Vice Chairman and the Clerk had agreed to obtain legal advice on the terms of the HCH Lease and Trust Deed.

This advice had been sought from Surrey Hills Solicitors who specialise in local council work and already have an established relationship with the Council.

A fee of £500 + vat was agreed for 2 hours work and was authorised by the Chairman and RFO in accordance with section 4.1 of the Financial Regulations.

War Memorial Playing Fields (WMPF)

It was noted that, given the useful advice obtained from Surrey Hills Solicitors in relation to HCH, it would be sensible to carry out a similar process to gain advice on the soundness of the WMPF conveyancing document dated 27 April 1949. In terms of good governance and protecting the Council's assets the councillors were asked to consider this option.

It was agreed that, although there was no pressing need to do this for the WMPF, it would be a good time to seek clarification around the legal framework for both trustees and the Council.

The following proposals were agreed:

- i. To note that the Council Chairman in conjunction with the RFO had agreed, in accordance with section 4.1 of the Financial Regulations, to seek initial legal*

advice from Surrey Hills Solicitors in relation to the Lease and Trust Deed for Harting Community Hall at a cost of £500 +vat

- ii. *To agree advice should be sought from Surrey Hills Solicitors in relation to the War Memorial Playing Field Conveyancing document at a cost of up to £500 + vat*

116. Harting Community Hall (HCH)

In the last few months, the HCH Trustees had indicated there might be difficulties finding sufficient trustees to manage and run the hall. This might potentially mean the HCH charity would be wound up with the management of the Hall being handed to the Parish Council.

The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk had met with the Chairman of HCH to discuss the situation.

The discussions along with the advice from Surrey Hills Solicitors show there are four potential options:

- HCH, aided by the Parish Council, try to find more trustees and continue with the current set up
- HCH wind up the charity and management is handed over to the Parish Council
- The Parish Council run the hall as a sole trustee of the charity
- The Parish Council enter into a co-ordination agreement with HCH, effectively working as a contractor to run the hall

It was recognised that each of these has its problems and the HCH Chairman will be contacting ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) who will hopefully be able to provide further help and guidance. The members noted the report and hoped that more trustees may come forward from the community. It was acknowledged there would be a need for further details and guidance about the potential co-ordination agreement and that Surrey Hills Solicitors should be approached to supply this.

The following proposals were agreed:

- i. *To note the report*
- ii. *To agree that Surrey Hills Solicitors are asked to provide further information and guidance to allow the Parish Council to consider the implications of a co-ordination agreement between the Parish Council and Harting Community Hall Trust*

117. West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-2036 (WSTP) Consultation

WSCC have published the Draft West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-2036 (WSTP) for a period of consultation which ends on Friday 8th October. The Draft Plan is available to view at www.westsussex.gov.uk/WSTPconsultation.

The members were asked to consider the consultation and feedback any comments to the Clerk by 24 September 2021.

The following proposal was agreed:

That the members feedback any views on the consultation to the clerk by 24 September 2021 to enable the Council Chairman in conjunction with the HABAC Chairman to prepare a suitable response.

118. Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information policy was reviewed and agreed.

119. Health & Safety and Risk strategy

The Health & Safety and Risk strategy was reviewed and agreed.

120. Finance

120.1. The members noted the cheques paid in August 2021.

Undisclosed	Clerk & RFO Salary	887.60
Mrs S Bull	village gathering entertainment	490.00
Wendy Reilly	face painting dep - village gathering	10.00
Petaprint	Emergency group leaflets	170.00
John M Carter Ltd	Marquee - village gathering	1,650.60
M H Kennedy & Son Ltd	Grass cutting	169.20
Trish Walker	Monthly Zoom subscription	14.39

120.2. It was agreed that the following payments should be made:

Undisclosed	Clerk and RFO Salary	941.60
HMRC	Tax and NI contributions	104.52
Information Commissioner	Data Protection Fee Renewal	40.00
Sally Bull	Expenses for Parish Gathering	240.46
Harting War Memorial Playing Field	Lengthsman	110.00
M H Kennedy & Son Ltd	Grass cutting	338.40
Mt T Ralph	Restoration of North Lane Fingerpost	1,740.00
Trish Walker	Monthly Zoom subscription	14.39

120.3. The income for August and September 2021 was noted.

Harting Horticultural Society – contribution to marquee £687.75

121. Bank Reconciliation for September 2021

It was noted that the bank reconciliation had been scrutinised and signed by the Chairman of the Finance Committee. The Chairman of the Council then signed the reconciliation in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

122. Bank balance as of 31 August 2021 £77,097.41

Noted.

123. Budget statement to 31 August 2021

Noted.

124. Aims and Objectives Advisory Committee (AOAC)

The unconfirmed minutes of the AOAC held on 6 September 2021 were noted and the following proposals were agreed:

- i. *That the Council note the Emergency Plan has been reviewed and no amendments are recommended.*
- ii. *That the Council note the review of the risk assessments for Finance, Homeworking, Reputation and Expertise and Safeguarding Information, Litter Picking, POSAC, Public Safety, Covid playgrounds and volunteers and no amendments are recommended.*

125. Planning Committee

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 15 July 2021 and the unconfirmed minutes of 12 August 2021 were noted.

126. Feedback from WMPF and HCH representatives

The HCH representative confirmed there had been a meeting on 4 October 2021 where a presentation had been made to Mrs De Beer, the outgoing Chairman.

The WMPF representative reported the football team was very successful and was likely to move up a league. The cricket team was struggling, and its future is currently doubtful. It was noted the entrance gates to the field are in need of repair.

127. Correspondence: None.

128. Clerk's report

The report was noted.

129. Items for future meetings

Fingerposts

Jubilee 2022

130. Date of next meeting: The next meeting would be held on Thursday 21 October 2021 at Harting Community Hall, time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.